

Organizational structure was managed under a modified Incident Command System (ICS) for optimal information exchange and hazard identification throughout the County. (Appendix C, Teton County Wildfire Group Participation).

The Teton County Wildfire Group conducted monthly meetings from July 2003 through January 2004. Group Supervisors met with Team Leaders weekly or bi-monthly. Development of the Teton County Wildfire Mitigation Plan was achieved through input to and from the County Wildfire Group. (Appendix C, Monthly Meeting Reports). The local newspaper, "Teton Valley News", published progress and informative articles after each TCWFG meeting including the phone number and email address for public input, and participation.

Numerous wildfire hazard questionnaires were distributed and completed by residents of the County. An example of the questionnaire and collated responses are located in Appendix B. Numerous stakeholder interviews were conducted. A list of Teton County stakeholders interviewed is also in Appendix C. Evaluation were made for wildfire hazards on WUI areas at risk in Teton County relating to their fuels type, condition, density, combined with slope, aspect and soil stability. This rating system identified wildfire hazard areas throughout the county as low, moderate, high and extreme. Survivable space and structure evaluations were conducted by Dynamac Corporation Fire Specialist and the Teton County Fire Department using NFPA 299 and NFPA 1144 hazard severity formats.

2.0 TETON COUNTY PROFILE

2.1 Geography

Teton County, Idaho consists of approximately 459 square miles (294,012 acres). Most of the County is in private holdings (65%), with Federal or State managed lands constituting approximately 34% of the County. The remaining 1% of land base consists of waterways (Appendix A, Map 1, Land Status). The topography ranges from the high elevation (6,000 ft. average) Teton Basin that drains the Teton River and its tributaries, to the Big Hole Mountains in the southwest portion of the County, where peaks reach 9,000 ft Appendix A, Map2, Topography and Geographic Features). Counties that border Teton County include Bonneville, Madison, and Fremont Counties, as well as the State of Wyoming's own Teton County.

2.2 Current Population and Population Trends

The population of Teton County is approximately 6,000 (2000 census), which represents a 100% population increase since 1990, when the recorded census was just over 3,000. Teton County experiences a significant seasonal increase in population brought about by summer vacationers. This segment of the county's population has been estimated to be between 30% and 50% above the base population. Using census numbers to reflect the

year round population, the addition of 30% to 50% could result in a substantial seasonal impact with a potential of up to 9,000 summertime residents.

The county seat is located in the city of Driggs, Idaho. Other populated areas include the cities of Victor and Teton, with county-wide development occurring in Darby, Bates, Cache, and Felt.

Residential private land development in Teton County continues to increase. Some of the numerous subdivisions in Teton County include: Aspen Point, Grand Teton Estates, Packsaddle Creek Estates, Saddlehorn Ranch, Targhee Ranch, Teton Springs Golf and Casting, Trout's Teton Valley Ranch, Willow Creek Ranch, Teewinot, and others.

The population growth in Teton County exceeded 100% from 1990 to 2000. Population trends reviewed and identified in the County Comprehensive Plan project another doubling of the County population by 2010, for a total expectation of over 12,000 Teton County residents. This increase in resident numbers will result in increased demand on County highways, emergency services and other County infrastructure assets.

2.3 Climate

Climate in Teton County is extremely variable due to differences in elevation. Average annual precipitation at the 6,100 ft. level is 15.9 inches, with average annual snowfall of 73.7 inches. Highest average daily maximum temperature occurs in the hottest month, July, and is 81.7° F. Lowest average daily minimum temperature occurs in the coldest month, January, and registers at 6.4° F. The driest month is November, and the wettest month is June.

The following average readings were recorded from each site from 1971 to 2000:

High Temperature(F): Average of Stations – 53.0

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOT
Driggs	28.7	33.1	40.2	51.0	61.6	71.2	78.8	73.2	68.6	56.6	39.7	29.8	52.7
Victor	28.9	33.6	40.7	50.9	61.5	71.3	79.3	78.9	69.2	56.6	39.5	29.8	53.3

Low Temperature (F): Average of Stations – 27.0

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOT
Driggs	8.3	11.4	19.1	26.5	33.8	40.8	46.3	44.8	36.6	27.8	18.4	8.8	26.6
Victor	9.4	12.4	19.7	26.9	34.4	41.4	46.9	45.3	37.3	28.5	18.9	9.8	27.5

Precipitation: Year Average of Stations – 17.1

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOT
Driggs	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.3	2.2	1.3	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.5	15.9
Victor	1.6	1.2	1.4	1.6	2.6	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	18.3

2.4 Vegetation

Teton County is predominantly a high elevation valley habitat, with traditional riparian areas of grasses, sedges and low brush. In the higher elevations, rising from the basin floor, numerous forested areas dot the landscape, exhibiting timber species of Douglas fir, sub-alpine fir, lodgepole pine and Englemann spruce. Understory within the forested areas consists of numerous forbs, grasses and shrubs.

Sagebrush/grass communities are common at lower elevations or on south and southwest aspects. The lower elevation transitions to mixed conifer forests in most of the county with some mixed fir at higher elevations on North, and East aspects. At higher elevations spruce/fir and lodgepole pine forests are common. Most privately owned lands are within the Sagebrush/grass or the mixed conifer/quaking aspen community types of Teton County.

Fire has played an important role in the development of the vegetation in the County. Exclusion of fire, or mechanical treatment of the mixed conifer and aspen forests of the County, has resulted in increased wildfire fuels accumulation, with overabundant seedlings and saplings on areas of private and public lands. This accumulation, combined with development in or adjacent to the forests of the County, has increased risk of economic loss by wildfire to residents of these areas. The vegetation regimes in Teton County and their condition serve as a significant factor in predicting wildfire hazard.

The grass and shrub vegetation, cultivated fields and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands in the lower elevations of the Teton Valley are near the county's main communities and pose an additional wildfire threat once cured.

Vegetation in Teton County is instrumental in providing stability to and preventing soil erosion, maintaining water quality, and providing areas for recreation and wildlife habitat.

2.5 Geology

Teton County is within the Wyoming Overthrust Belt System located in eastern Idaho and western Wyoming. Only the main basin that runs the center length of the County is relatively level, with the surrounding mountainous landscape brought about by historic uplifts, faults, fault blocks, alluvial deposits and stream cutting action that has created steep narrow canyons. Approximately 50% of Teton County has slopes steeper than 40%.

2.6 Soils

There are a wide variety of soils found throughout Teton County. Surface soils are typically moderate with coarse loams and soils weathered from igneous and sedimentary sources. These sandy loams have little adhesion or cohesion. Sedimentation monitoring and mitigation can assist in stabilizing soils, especially on steep slopes.

2.7 Wildlife

Teton County has a wide variety of wildlife species and habitats. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game manages wildlife populations and the U.S. Forest Service, BLM and Idaho Department of Lands are responsible for wildlife habitats on lands they manage. Large mammals that are found in Teton County include mule deer, whitetail deer, moose, elk, grizzly bear, black bear, and an occasional gray wolf. Coyote, bobcat, wolverine, snowshoe hare, cottontail rabbits, red fox, badgers, beavers, pine martens, porcupines, and skunks can also be found within the county.

Upland birds present in Teton County include blue grouse, spruce grouse, and sharp-tail grouse. Raptor species include golden eagles, osprey, prairie falcon, red-tailed hawk, and wintering bald eagles.

Waterfowl habitat is widespread throughout the Teton Basin. Waterfowl present include Canada geese, numerous duck species, trumpeter swans, and sandhill cranes.

Other birds common to Teton County are flickers, woodpeckers, robins, killdeer, stellar jays, dippers, mountain blue birds, hummingbirds, red-winged blackbirds, ravens, crows, and magpies.

2.8 Recreation

Recreation in Teton County is critically important to the economy, but is also a sensitive and contentious issue. There are mixed feelings among the local population regarding results of expanded recreation user numbers, with the associated economic advantages, as compared with the quiet enjoyment of the life style which has predominated the valley in the past. The natural beauty of the valley, assets for fishing and hunting, prime snow conditions, and proximity to popular National Forests and National Parks, contribute to making the recreation based activities within Teton County highly attractive. As the population in counties adjacent to Teton County has increased, the recreational use of Teton County's Federal and State lands has also increased. Summer and winter recreational activities available in Teton County are also enjoyed by outdoor enthusiasts on a national, as well as an international basis.

Water-based recreational activities in Teton County are mainly limited to fishing. Land based activities include, but are not limited to: camping, hiking, mountain biking, birding, hunting, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, snowboarding, downhill and cross country skiing.

Grand Targhee Ski Area is located in adjacent Teton County, Wyoming, and hosts numerous skiers during winter months.

2.9 Bodies of Water: Rivers, Creeks, Watersheds

The main waterway in Teton County is the Teton River, which forms the valley/basin that is the backbone and main thoroughfare within the county.

Besides providing recreational opportunities and watershed provisions, the river and its tributaries provide a water source for engines and helicopters during wildfire suppression operations. Most rivers/creeks in Teton County are accessible, with either a direct or adjacent road access.

River flow rates generally peak in June with low flow rates in August and September.

Other important creeks and/or drainages in Teton County include: Trail Creek, Fox Creek, Darby Creek, Teton Creek, South Leigh Creek, North Leigh Creek, Badger Creek, Packsaddle Creek and Horseshoe Creek. Numerous other important creeks, tributaries, and watersheds support developed areas throughout Teton County.

Watersheds in Teton County directly influence downstream water use for irrigated farmland within the County and neighboring counties. Watershed protection, stabilization, and water quality are high priorities for the County's private, state, and federal land managers or owners.

2.10 Transportation

For an area of over 400 square miles, Teton County has a very limited network of improved highways. Timing, location, and expansion of transportation networks are important issues affecting future access.

The majority of vehicle transportation in Teton County occurs on one of three paved State Highways.

- State Highway 33 from the Madison County line southeasterly to the Wyoming State line.
- State Highway 31 from the Victor City limits to the top of Pine Creek Pass and the Bonneville County line.
- State Highway 32 from Bitch Creek and the Fremont County line south to its intersection with State Highway 33 north of Tetonia.

The Teton County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for maintenance, and construction of roads in the county. The department is currently working on road ordinances that will be part of the revised county comprehensive plan. These ordinances will address future needs to facilitate population growth as well as fire protection requirements and access needs. Road funds come largely from County, State and Federal sources, augmented by PILT funds paid by the surrounding National Forests.

There is extensive use of the road system in Teton County by out-of-county traffic. The existence of Federal and State forests and parks draws high numbers of recreational users participating in various spring, summer, fall, and winter activities. Teton County receives no additional funds for added maintenance or road deterioration associated with this use. There are no highway districts in Teton County.

2.11 USDA-Forest Service Roads

The USDA Forest Service, Caribou-Targhee Forest, has built and maintains numerous two-lane gravel roads throughout the county for recreation, and logging. Some of these have been closed and many are currently gated with access allowed for seasonal use or during a wildfire. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest has recommendations and requirements for these roads, and a travel plan with requirements for the trail system and off road or trail travel.

2.12 Aviation Facilities

Teton County has no regularly scheduled commercial (passenger carrying) flights. Driggs/Reed Memorial Airport is a general aviation airport owned and operated by the City of Driggs, with a 7,300-foot runway. Airport extension and hangar construction are underway to improve safety. This airstrip exhibits increased traffic during weekends and holidays. It can also be used to support various fixed and rotor-wing aircraft during large or multiple wildfire incidents.

2.13 Rail Transportation

No railway exists within the County. Union Pacific Railroad removed the tracks several years ago and does not maintain any facilities including rights-of-way.

2.14 Emergency Services

Law enforcement is provided by the Teton County Sheriff throughout the county. Law enforcement is also provided by the Teton County Sheriff within the municipalities of Driggs, Victor and Teton. Ambulance services are located in Driggs and provided by the Teton Valley Hospital. Teton County Fire Departments are located in Driggs, Teton and Victor, and provide service throughout the county. A mutual assistance (aid) program between Teton County Fire Department and the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, exists for wildfire protection in the County. The fire department in Teton County, Idaho also provides emergency fire services for structures and wildfires in Teton County, Wyoming through an agreement with the counties and the aforementioned mutual assistance (aid) agreement.